



STATE OF MICHIGAN
FAMILY INDEPENDENCE AGENCY
LANSING



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

January 13, 2005

Terence Smith
Editorial Page Editor
The Saginaw News
203 S. Washington Ave.
Saginaw, MI 48607

Dear Mr. Smith:

The Jan. 9 story about the number of day care licensing violations in Saginaw, "Violations abundant," describes a situation that is of great concern to all of us in the Family Independence Agency.

The FIA's Office of Children and Adult Licensing (OCAL) is committed to goals that include helping to assure that the estimated 350,000 children attending day care in Michigan are provided with safe and developmentally appropriate child care. The series of situations described in the article does represent an unusual number of incidents in a short period of time in a single community. In 2004, OCAL investigated 1,935 complaints which involved less than 10 percent of the licensed child care facilities in Michigan. We substantiated many of these complaints recommended changes, and aggressively evaluated these substantiations to help us understand how we can better assure that our children are receiving safe and quality child care.

Despite the challenge of shrinking budgets that have forced us to reduce our investigative staff, we are committed to improving the care our children are receiving. We are now making administrative changes to provide field staff with additional training in evaluating the appropriate actions available to assure the protection of children.

Governor Granholm has made improving the quality of care children receive in child care centers a major priority. As a result, we are changing the licensure standards for child care facilities. We are now drafting new rules for both home-based and center-based child care that will be directed toward enhancing the social-emotional development of children. These new rules will establish a lead caregiver position for child care centers, require annual training for all child care providers and increase the educational requirements for program directors. Equally as important, these new rules will address increased safety standards related to infant sleeping, water hazards, play equipment, radon and CO2 testing, and fire safety inspections. It is anticipated that these new rules could take effect as early as the fall of 2005.

To achieve that goal, we are committed to working with community agencies to turn around the day care licensing situation in Saginaw and to move toward helping to provide more quality child care for all children in Michigan.

Sincerely,

Marianne Udow
Director, Michigan Family Independence Agency